

Thurston County

Increasing Public Safety and Combating Crime:

Methamphetamine:

As a founding member of the Congressional Caucus to Fight and Control Methamphetamine, Congressman Baird has diligently worked to provide Washington communities with funding to fight this menace. Baird's efforts have helped to bring in more than \$11 million to combat methamphetamine use and clean meth contaminated sites in Washington state. From these funds, Thurston County received \$533,367 in grants to create and fund the operation of a Family Meth Treatment Court. The Family Meth Treatment Court's mission is to help drug addicted parents get off drugs and learn how to be good parents at the same time. Early results suggest this program is making a real difference and helping mothers and fathers kick their drug addictions and care for their children more responsibly.

Expanding Transportation Alternatives:

Intercity Transit:

Over the past two years, Congressman Baird has secured almost \$2 million for Intercity Transit to purchase new buses for its service expansion. Intercity Transit serves a population of more than 140,000 in Olympia, Tumwater, Lacey and Yelm. Riders board these buses and vans more than 9,500 times each weekday and 3 million times per year. This funding will keep the bus system safe by ensuring that equipment is up to date and adequate.

Keeping Thurston County Moving:

Congressman Baird has helped secure over \$3 million for the widening of Interstate 5 (I-5) from the Rush Road interchange to the Maytown interchange in Thurston County. Currently, this area of I-5 has only two lanes of travel in each direction, creating a bottleneck when traffic north and south of this area, which had been traveling in three lanes, is compressed. Adding to the problem, the amount of traffic using I-5 has steadily increased in recent years, contributing to delays and congestion and increasing the safety risk. This project will increase capacity and improve safety along the interstate. I-5 is a critical component of both commerce and tourism in the state of Washington. Improving I-5 between Rush Road and Maytown is vital to the economic success of this area and to maintaining a positive quality of life for those who live and work there.

4th Avenue Bridge Reconstruction:

The magnitude 6.8 earthquake that struck Olympia in 2001 heavily damaged the already aging 4th Avenue Bridge. Congressman Baird worked with local officials as well as federal agencies to secure an emergency declaration, which allowed the reconstruction of the 4th Avenue Bridge to be expedited by more than two years. Congressman Baird also helped secure more than \$18 million in federal grants to reduce the burden on local officials and bringing relief to downtown businesses and commuters.

Chehalis Western Trail:

Serving on the House Transportation Committee, Congressman Baird has requested and secured an authorization of federal funding for a project that will "bridge the gap" in the backbone of Thurston County's regional north-south non-motorized transportation corridor. Specifically, the project will construct a .6 mile pedestrian and bike bridge over I-5 connecting separate parts of the Chehalis-Western Trail system. The total system reflects a fifteen-year commitment of local, state, and regional agencies to develop this non-motorized transportation system.

Keeping the Tumwater Safeway Post Office Open:

Congressman Baird joined in the effort to keep the Tumwater Safeway Post Office from closing, after the store posted signs stating that Safeway would close all of its postal stations the following month. The Department of Labor was requiring all 1,500 Safeway stores to provide paperwork, which should have been required only for the approximately two percent of Safeway stores with postal offices. Congressman Baird successfully petitioned the Department of Labor to request an exemption from coverage regarding certain contracts between Safeway and the Postal Service. Thanks to his efforts the Tumwater Safeway Post Office remained open.

Protecting Mental Health Care:

Mental Health Care under Medicaid:

For the past 11 years Washington state has used federal Medicaid funds in conjunction with state funds to provide mental health care to Medicaid eligible patients as well as to patients who need service but do not qualify for Medicaid. In April 2004, the federal agency that oversees Medicaid and Medicare, CMS, required that, effective January 1, 2005, the state cease using their Medicaid funds to serve patients who do not qualify for Medicaid. This change, which came at a time the State Legislature was out of session and could not meet to solve the problem, threatened to suddenly terminate mental health care for 40,000 patients across our state.

As a former clinical psychologist who has worked in community mental clinics, Congressman Baird understands the importance of mental health care in our communities. With the proper sustained treatment, people who would otherwise be debilitated by their illness can be functioning, contributing members of society. When he learned of the proposed rule change by CMS and the potential loss of treatment

for patients in need, Congressman Baird took immediate action.

After consulting with members of the legislature and state agencies, Congressman Baird personally contacted administrators at the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The Congressman drew upon his own professional background to explain the needs of the patients and the harm that could result from terminating their services. He then requested an extension be granted to give the state time to arrange alternative funding to continue the care. To their great credit, officials within CMS were willing to work closely with the Congressman and the state and in late December a six month waiver was granted, extending care through June 2005. This measure will save the state of Washington over \$20 million and, more importantly, will allow 40,000 of our citizens to continue to receive the care and treatment they need to be productive, functioning members of our communities.

Thurston
County Webpage

City
of Olympia

City
of Tumwater

Thurston
County Chamber of Commerce

The
Olympian

The
Evergreen State College

Thurston
County Sheriff's Office

Thurston
County Economic Development Council

Housing
Authority of Thurston County

Educational
Service District 113

Lewis
and Clark Expedition

Washington
State Government Information & Services